

# Commission Chairmen Emeriti get top state arts award

Wed - 27 Mar Written by Jon W Sparks



Memphians Knox Phillips and David Porter are among 9 Tennessee luminaries to receive the prestigious Governor's Arts Awards from Governor and Mrs. Haslam in a private ceremony April 23rd at the Governor's Mansion. Receiving jointly the Arts Leadership award, both Phillips and Porter are Chairmen *Emeriti* of The Memphis & Shelby County Film and Television Commission. The Commission nominated both men for the award, the highest arts award in the state.

The Tennessee Arts Commission's Executive Director Anne Pope in a statement said: "Recognized for their leadership in the Memphis music and film communities, Knox Phillips and David Porter have played major roles in establishing Memphis as a national and worldwide center of creative influence and impact. Both are considered goodwill ambassadors for the city and the unique Memphis sound. Phillips and Porter have served on the national level as trustees for the Grammy's National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), both have served as board members of the Tennessee Film, Entertainment, and Music Commission, and both are past chairmen of The Memphis & Shelby County Film and Television Commission."

The TAC statement continued: "Knox Phillips is a music producer, an engineer, and has added to the legacy of his father Sam Phillips, the founder of Sun Studio where Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis first recorded."

*The Commercial Appeal* has called Phillips, "the goodwill ambassador and lobbyist for Memphis music." While serving as a national trustee for Nashville's NARAS chapter, Knox Phillips pitched the idea of Memphis having its own chapter. Ultimately, Memphis was selected against such heavy competition as London, Toronto, and Chicago – one of only 12 chapters in the world. In 2007, Phillips received a NARAS Lifetime Achievement Award." Nominator Linn Sitler, Memphis/Shelby County Film Commissioner, perhaps best captured Phillips: "With a heart as big as the state, Knox has reached out time and time again to the state's music and film community members. He has reached out with both his wallet and his compassionate willingness to listen and find solutions to problems...or just to listen and encourage and praise."

Regarding legendary songwriter/producer David Porter, his personal music catalogue alone has sold more than 300 million units, and has been featured in countless film soundtracks. These include *When We Were Soldiers* and the John Belushi and Dan

Aykroyd *Blues Brothers* movie classic. Porter's work has also been used in the naming of different network TV series, and his music played on such network television shows, as *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Saturday Night Live*. Among Porter's many hits without Isaac Hayes as his co-writer were Mariah Carey's "Dream Lover" and Will Smith's "Getting Jiggy With It."

Among the hits co-written and co-produced with partner Isaac Hayes are "Soul Man" and "Hold On, I'm Coming," which are in the Grammy Hall of Fame. Both Porter and Hayes have been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, have received the BMI Award for Film and TV, and the Pioneer Award from the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, along with many, many other awards. Hayes and Porter's major hits were not only written, but also produced by the famous partners. In 1989, Porter became part of America's history when his and Hayes' songs were given a two-day salute by The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. In her nominating essay, Film Commissioner Linn Sitler concluded: "David Porter is a man who -- in all the seasons of his life -- has distinguished himself on both the world and Tennessee stages as a world-class 'Distinguished Artist.' His work speaks for itself."

In 2012, *The Commercial Appeal* recognized Porter as one of its "12 Who Made A Difference." Porter was specifically selected for his October 2012 launch of the nonprofit THE CONSORTIUM MMT (Memphis Music Town), a professional music development partnership that seeks to foster, rejuvenate and capitalize on the historic musical underpinnings of Memphis.

All recipients for the Tennessee Arts Commission's Governor's Arts Awards were selected from a field of nominees in three different categories – Folklife Heritage, Arts Leadership, and Distinguished Artist. Another Memphian, Bobby "Blue" Bland, is receiving the Distinguished Artist Award that recognizes artists "of exceptional talent and creativity in any discipline, who over the course of a career, have contributed to the arts and have helped guide and influence directions, trends, and aesthetic practices on a state or national level." Bland was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1981, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992, and received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997.

Other recipients include:

Polly Page of Pleasant Hill, and independent radio station WDVX in Knoxville for the Folklife Heritage Award (for folk artists or organizations that have made outstanding contributions to artistic tradition).

Donald Fann of Woodbury and James C. "Jim" Martin of Johnson City will also receive Arts Leadership awards.

In addition to Bland, the Distinguished Artist award is being given to Ann Patchett of Nashville and Jim Sherraden of Nashville.